Greenfield, Kilgobbin, Co. Dublin
July 16. 1861

My dear Friend

It is full time for me to answer your very welcome letter which reached me some time last month, and would have been answered at once but for my wish to acknowledge the receipt of the portrait of Azeglio at the same time. I wrote immediately to Emma, but did not get any answer for some weeks when she wrote me a letter that ~~she~~ was well worth waiting for and which explained that the reason of her delay was that she had not access to the trunk that contained the portrait. However it has not yet come & I dont like delaying any longer telling you how very glad I was to hear from you after such a long, long silence as at one time I did not think could ever take place between us. I did not grumble, but I was sorry that for very good and substantial reasons none of you had time to tell me whether you were dead or alive. I wrote to L'Angel to ask him, but he sent no answer. I wrote to Miss Chapman but she said nothing of the Italian Westons & only talked about the cause

1. Owing to a mistake of mine you will have to pick your way through the pages.

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Irish who hate England, and who have always been accustomed by their priests to follow their spiritual leaders blindly, and without regard to reason or common sense. These priests are at this present hour the chief impediment to the rapid progress of the people in education and prosperity. It is owing to them and not to any natural deficiency of wit or intellect that such a very small number of the poorer class amongst us fight their way upwards by any means except sordid saving and money getting.

However whether England be or be not so greatly in the wrong in this matter as she is said to be in America there can, I think be no doubt that slaveholders will never again hold the Union in leading strings for any length of time. Dr Cheever is now in Ireland and I spent some hours with him a few days ago. He says that in his opinion there are tens of thousands of Democrats who fell into the popular cry after the fall of Fort Sumter who would gladly coalesce with the Southerners again if they dared & that if such a coalition were to take place, they would be far fiercer against the abolitionists than they have ever really been against the South. I fear some such contingency will be required in order to open the eyes of the great mass of the Northern people to the impossibility of a union with the South & the necessity of sweeping away slavery altogether if they are to enjoy national tranquillity.

I like Dr Cheever very much. He is I am sure an earnestly religious man and there is about him a simplicity of manner and an earnest straightforwardness that are very pleasing. I heard him speak of the noble directness & uncompromisingness of Wendell Phillips and the shuffling expediency of H. W. Beecher with an expression that was very satisfactory coming from a thoroughly orthodox minister.

Last autumn we had a visit of some weeks from Mattie Griffith, the young authoress of the "Autobiography of a Female Slave" & of "Madge Vertner" who liberated her own slaves and withdrew into an honorable poverty. Before she had been many minutes acquainted with me I told her her voice and accent reminded me of the Westons & she said she had been told the same before which is honorable to both parties. I have never seen any one with greater ease of manner, and she is an exceedingly pleasant person. About two months ago Mrs Webb & I paid a visit of about a week to Miss Estlin at ~~the~~ her tidy little Mansion called Hereford House, Durdham Down. It is prettily situated on the edge of the open down in a high & healthy locality. The house is furnished from her father's stock of the entertaining odds & ends that your sister Caroline will remember there during our pleasant visit in 1852.

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more dependent for their opinions on these papers than the Americans are upon the New York Herald or the Tribune — and as if it was the custom (which it is not) for the English people to assemble in Exeter Hall & pass authoritative resolutions upon the internal affairs of other nations in matters of peace and war. If the war had been at the first or if it became even now an openly anti-slavery war the result would have been altogether different. If it became an anti-slavery war indifference would be unaccountable. As it is not one, the course that has been taken is readily accounted for. I am persuaded that much of this anti-British outcry has had its origin in the policy of the New York Herald & other democratic journals to turn the odium for their traitorous complicity with the South from themselves by turning it against England. A strong feeling prevails in England that no matter what her course may be, some way will be discovered by American editors to pick a quarrel with her — & that this quarrel will ~~be~~ as a matter of course become popular. I do not wonder at this so much since so large a portion of the American population are

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slave system, and as we heard nothing except from the abolitionists of this war for its maintenance being likely to weaken slavery it is not surprising that no general interest was felt amongst us. At the same time my full belief is, that the great majority of the English people who had any opinion on the matter were and are in favor of the free States. I never doubted that the war would ~~event~~ immediately weaken and eventually destroy slavery. In a country like England with a free press it would be absurd to expect that there should not be a great variety of opinion and that people should not try to make their opinion heard. The cotton interest is powerful & important, & to them an unlimited supply of cotton is of immense interest. To these people the South is more near to their hearts than any other. A great many think that the attempt to subdue the South so far as to restore the Union is impracticable, & that if successful, such a union would not be worth retaining. Great offence has been taken at what the Times ~~th~~ has said — at the views of the Anti Slavery Reporter — and at the silence of Exeter Hall. As if the English people were any

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Mattie Griffith was with Miss Estlin and we had a very pleasant visit only interrupted by Miss Estlin's being obliged to keep her bed two days of the time. She has wretchedly bad health and frequent head aches. The object of our visit was to confer with Miss E. about a project of hers to publish a Life of John Brown that might be more to English taste than the high flying production of Redpath. Mrs Webb undertook to write it ~~but~~ from Redpath's & other materials which we collected in the Anti Slavery papers and from Americans. The authorship to be gratuitous. The pecuniary risk to be borne by Miss E. As matters have turned out the compilation has been pretty equally divided between husband & wife & the book has just been completed. It runs to about 460 pages of foolscap 8vo. ~~&c~~ and is to have a likeness in photograph from an American original. This took up a great deal of our time and was on the whole a most interesting occupation. How the book will sell and whether Miss Estlin will be a heavy loser, time alone can tell. Naturally on its having engaged so much of our time & thoughts we have formed a very exalted idea of the moral qualities of John Brown. I hope I may be able to send a copy to you by Emma on her return.

The most important piece of domestic news I have for you is that the elder of my two sons, Alfred, who was two years in Australia & is now my partner & right hand man, is about to be married to a very good young woman of respectable family & excellent disposition whom he has known & liked & by whom

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he has been favorably known since they were both children. Just before this momentous arrangement was concluded Alfred had planned & paid part of his passage money for a trip to Iceland, which has been happily accomplished. He circumnavigated the island, was within view of the arctic sun, had daylight for two weeks, and visited the Faroe Islands going and returning. He also visited the famous Geysers or boiling springs in Iceland, the greatest in the world. This was a most interesting trip, and he came over with his looks greatly improved — & a good deal blistered by the Northern sun.

As to Italy you know that I am her warm well wisher and feel a deep interest in all that concerns her.

How you must have felt the loss of Mrs Browning. Emma in her letter to me speaks very feelingly of the suddenness of the bereavement. It is a thousand pities that her often rugged & careless style has so much marred the noblest poetry ever written by a woman. After all no grandeur of ideas, no massiveness of thought will countervail the neglect on the part of a poet of the ornaments of his art.

About the Athenaeums, I was so long in doubt of where you were, whether in Rome or in some other part of Italy, in France or on your way home, that I did not care to send them at random, being doubtful whether they would ever reach you. Now I intend to be more regular.

George Thompson has been travelling about with Dr Cheever, holding meetings in various parts of England. I know nothing very particular of him except that I apprehend he is in very narrow embarrassed circumstances. If some one were to leave him a fortune [redacted]

I own that the outbreak of this war in America has caused me many surprises. I wonder greatly at the unreserved exultation on the part of many out and out friends of non-resistance among the abolitionists at the opening of a long and bloody struggle. I don't wonder that they should be glad at the prospect of the overthrow of slavery at almost any price; but I am surprised that it is such unqualified gratification. Of all the articles in the anti-slavery papers I like none nearly so much as the leaders in the Standard, which are admirable, reasonable, and allowance making. I think there was no sufficient provocation for the outbursts of anger in the United States at the neutral position of England in this affair — since the struggle on the part of the free states has never yet taken the aspect of an anti-slavery struggle on the part of either the government or the people. On the contrary great pains have been taken to show that it is no such thing. Slaves have been repeatedly returned to their masters and neither Lincoln nor Seward has yet spoken one anti-slavery syllable since they took office. As far as professions go, the war on the part of the North is only an armed attempt to punish traitors and to restore the Union to its former dimensions. Now we have always heard from the abolitionists that the Union was one of the chief bulwarks of the

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he would have some chance of getting on comfortably. I do not know – oh yes I do know that Miss Sarah Remond is known to some of you – for I remember how enthusiastically she has praised your sister Deborah in my hearing for her sweetness, goodness & beauty. Well this sagacious lady is to be in Dublin next month at the Social Science Meeting, where we are to have Lord Brougham for President, and lots of many other great people besides & are to take tea with the Lord Lieutenant at the Castle for a winding up to the whole.

We are still living out at this place about seven miles from Dublin and enjoy it very much. It is a very pretty place – quite in the country, surrounded by meadows, with a mountain directly in view only a mile off from our back windows which also looks out upon a real country garden full of all sorts of old fashioned flowers, fruits & vegetables & nothing whatever of show, style, state, or magnificence. Beside the garden is a little pond through which passes a mountain stream, & by this pond a water hen has built her nest & brought forth her young, it abounds in trout, & is therefore visited by a heron in which we take great pride as an unmistakeable proof that we are really in the country, since even a heron thinks so.

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The railway is about a mile & a half away so that it takes us backwards and forwards on our way to town. We have a little Irish jaunting car & a little cream coloured pony to take us down, and bring us up in the evening. This is a very unambitious equipage. We have no visitors in the neighbourhood – but friends from town often call, particularly now in this rich summer time. This season has been far, far beyond the last in warmth, dryness, & geniality. It is a great season for small fruit – but the promise of apples & pears is remarkably small. They were blasted in the Spring. Both our girls are from home. One at Aberdeen at a water cure establishment from a chronic tendency to headache. The other with her cousins in Waterford on a visit. As far as I can learn after a long experiment, the water cure does not seem to have done much good, and we are at our wits end for some effectual remedy or alleviation. Do you know of any cure in such a case? She is a very amiable good girl & it is a thousand pities she is so tormented.

In Bristol we saw of your old friends there the Rev. Mr Chapman, the Rev. Mr James, & Mrs

Stephens. The last with the exception of Miss Estlin, is the only one who appeared to me to have much hearty interest in anti-slavery matters. Miss Griffiths, Mrs Webb & I called on her at Ashley Down, took tea there, & had a very pleasant time.

I had a few months ago a cordial & most interesting letter from Edmund Quincy, the first for a long time, giving some particulars of his wife whom he appears to have been very warmly and admiringly attached. He sent me a likeness of himself — (the same size as yours which you sent me) & the only one I ever saw of him which seemed like what I suppose him to be. As to yours I am sorry to say that with the exception of a certain Weston bearing about it, I would not have had the least idea who it was intended for. I am very sorry for I would greatly value any mementos of your family of this kind.

If you were to judge of my thoughtfulness about you and all your kindness to me in Rome from the letters you have got from me you would make a very great mistake. That fortnight was a white spot in my memory to which I continually recur, with feelings of grateful remembrance to those to whom

I owe so much of the pleasure it gave me. How the years roll past! When I went over to Liverpool to see Mrs Chapman & her party in 1848 who could have anticipated that in 1861 you would still be on this side of the Atlantic, settled for so many years not far from the Mediterranean. I don't at all wonder that it is so long since I have heard from Caroline. I know how busy she is, & how devoted her time & thoughts to your dear invalid to whom I wish to be affectionately remembered. Remembering her as I do, I am not in the least at a loss to know why you cherish her so much.

My wife is tolerably well, though not so very healthy & robust as she used to be. She is liable when overworked or over worried to be afflicted by bad head aches – which last for a day or more & greatly incapacitate her. When she is well she is a perfect pattern of an indefatigable industrious woman, always thinking of others – never of herself – just like Caroline. You would greatly like her if you knew her. She has the greatest repertory of poetry & appropriate pat poetical quotations for all times, seasons, and occasions of any one I ever knew. It is comical & amazing (both together) to observe how inexhaustibly they are from such varied sources – from Shakespeare & Milton to the most ordinary doggerel in the book

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I lately saw Miss Bessie Rayner Parkes in Dublin whom I last saw at Mrs Jameson's in Rome one evening we spent at her niece's. She was here to prepare the way for the Social Science Meeting which is to be held in this city next month. On that evening I remember seeing Miss Hosmer the sculptor, Miss Cushman & several other well known women. Miss Parkes is at the head of the movement for the employment of women, she is Editor of the Englishwoman's Journal, and is quite well known. She was accompanied by Miss Isa Craig who carried off the prize of £50 or £100 for the best poem at the Burns Commemoration with long lines. Have you heard of Miss Hunter who prefers to be called Madame Hunt from thanks to your introduction I was indebted for so much kindness in Florence. It is a loss in writing as you do from your present locality that I can hope to hear nothing of your opinion of the change in Italy or of the extent to which it appears to have affected the people.

Now having pretty well completed my budget of news and tried to write more plainly than usual which I hope you will appreciate I had better conclude this long winded letter. Of the Di Angelis I have heard nothing for years. Whether they have a large or a small family, how they are, where they are, what they are doing, I know not and would be very glad to know.

With my kindest regards to Caroline & Lucia I am ever truly Yours

Richard D Webb.

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